



Foster for Nottinghamshire

giving local children *roots*



Information pack



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What is fostering?

Why foster for NCC?

Fostering for Nottinghamshire County Council means you are helping children in your local area. As a non-profit organisation, we aim to place children with our own foster carers before contacting other agencies. All of our foster carers receive an exceptional benefits, support and training package.



What do foster carers do?

By becoming a foster carer you will be providing a welcoming and caring environment where children and young people will be safe from harm. You will be giving them the opportunity to grow and develop to reach their full potential, by helping to ensure that their emotional, health and educational needs are met.

The difficult backgrounds that many looked after children and young people have experienced means they may find it hard to build relationships. With support, patience and reassurance, you can help a child or young person to build their self-esteem and confidence.

Fostering today involves working closely with others involved in the welfare of the children you are caring for.

Foster carers work closely as a team, not only with professionals but also in supporting each other.

All looked after children and young people have a care plan and as a foster carer, you will be asked to attend meetings and reviews to talk about their well-being.

Our children come from diverse backgrounds with different life experiences. Your role will be to help a child understand and feel positive about themselves.

We try to provide placement choice for children and foster carers so that children can be matched with a loving and nurturing family and achieve their potential.

Fostering does involve all family members and it is important that the whole family are fully supportive and committed to fostering.

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Fostering is a rewarding and challenging role, with the chance for foster carers to make a real difference to a child or young person's life.

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Who Can foster?

Foster carers come from all backgrounds. What's important is your interest in caring for a child.



Most people can be considered as foster carers, but there are some requirements:

You can be:

- Single, married, divorced or living together.
- In a same sex relationship.
- Identifying as any gender.
- From any ethnic or religious background.
- A homeowner or living in rented accommodation.
- Employed or in receipt of benefits.
- Already a parent.
- Living with disabilities.

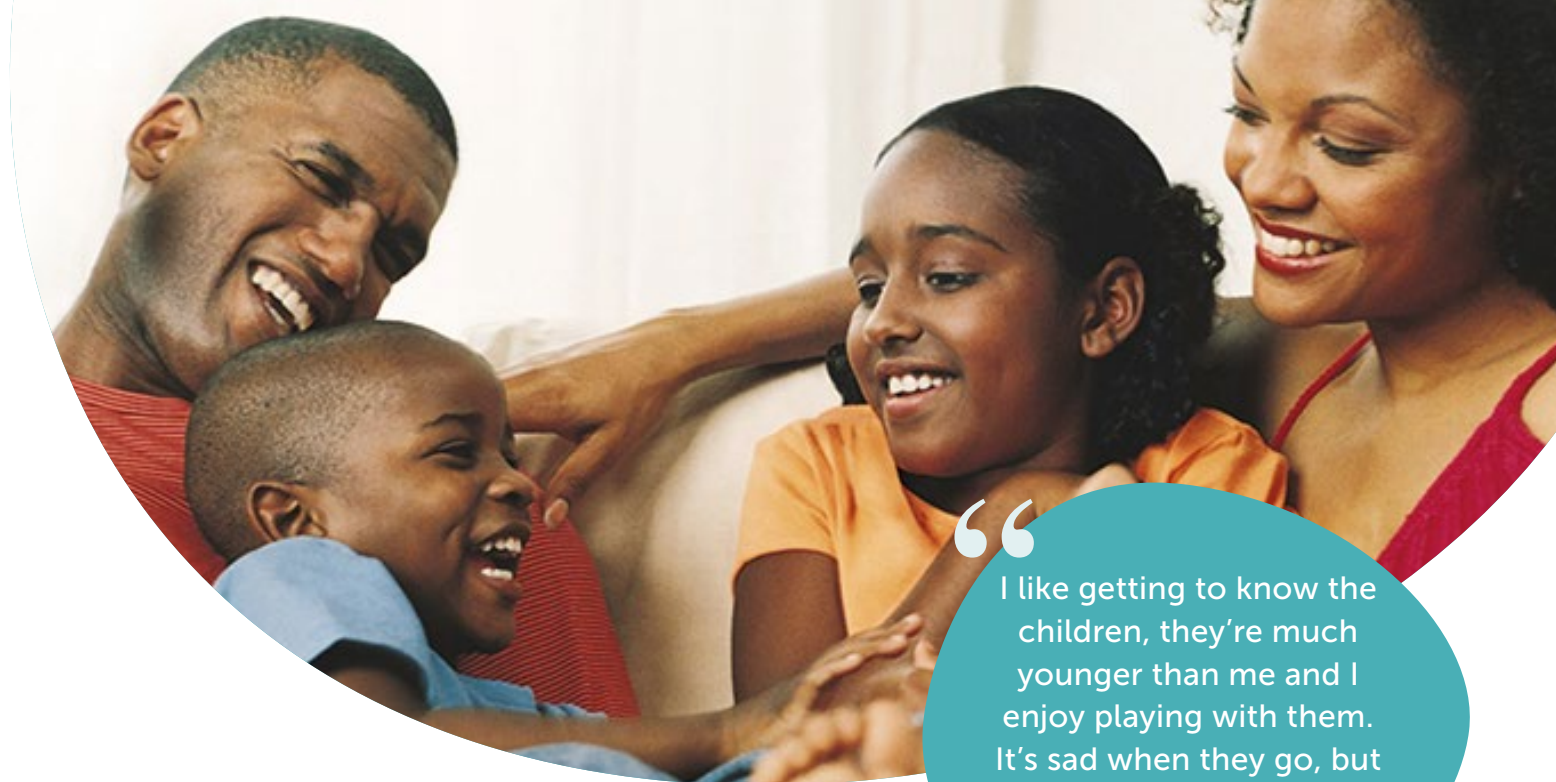


- Ideally, you will have a spare bedroom for the sole use of a foster child (we may discuss 0-2 year olds sharing a foster carer's room).
- You must live in or very near to Nottinghamshire.
- You must be aged over 21.
- You must have some experience of caring for or working with children or young people.
- If you are a couple then you must be able to demonstrate your relationship is stable and are both equally committed to fostering.
- You must not be pregnant.
- You must have no convictions for offences against children. Any other criminal history you have may affect your ability to foster.
- If you are smoker you will not be eligible to foster children under 5 years of age or children with health conditions. You will be expected to follow all guidance and recommendations related to smoking. This also relates to vaping and electronic cigarettes.

What is important:

- You have the skills to work as part of a team.
- You can show lots of kindness and understanding.
- You relate well to children and young people.
- You feel able to work with birth families and extended family.





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I like getting to know the children, they're much younger than me and I enjoy playing with them. It's sad when they go, but we can still keep in touch.

Carl - age 14

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Fostering as a family

Fostering in your own home will always involve other members of your family, therefore, it is very important that the decision to foster is supported by everyone.

Your own children will inevitably play a significant part - they will have to learn to share their parent/s and possessions with other children. Foster carers have found that their own children have benefitted greatly from fostering - giving them an understanding of other people's lives and feelings.

Your children will probably build good relationships with foster children, but sometimes they may find it hard to adapt if it is time for a child to move on. There may be times when your own children will experience difficulties getting on with a foster child. They may become upset at any special treatment or attention they feel is being given to them.

As a foster carer you will need to ensure that your own children have some time alone with you, perhaps by setting aside a certain time each day to chat and offer them the opportunity to share any worries or concerns they may have.

We recognise the importance of the role that your own children and other family members contribute towards the success of fostering within the family. As a foster carer, your family will be offered support from a member of the fostering team to enable you or your family members to discuss any concerns or worries.

Fostering is balancing the needs of both your own family members and the foster children you care for - your own children will be part of this and we want them to feel equally valued.

Each year, we host a celebration event to show our appreciation for everything that the children and young people do. A Sons and Daughters Council who represent the children of foster carers, meet and decide what activities they would like to do. The day gives them the opportunity to make new friends and take part in group activities. It is also an opportunity for them to get together with other children whose parents are foster carers to talk about fostering and share experiences in confidence with children in similar circumstances.

Myth Busting

Can I work and foster?

YES. There are several ways of fostering and we can help you choose one that will fit in with your lifestyle. If you work and are considering fostering it is essential that your employer is flexible and you are available to attend meetings, promote contact with the birth family and be at home to care for the children or young people when required. You could also become a support carer where you will provide short, regular periods of care such as a few days in the week, regular weekends and short breaks in the school holidays.

I am unemployed, does this rule me out as a foster carer?

NO. Children benefit from having someone to care for them full-time and as a foster carer you will receive fostering allowances and other payments to cover the cost of caring for a child or young person.

I'm single, can I still foster?

YES. Some children benefit from having one-to-one attention. What you will need is a committed support network.

Does a foster child need a room of their own?

This is dependent upon the age of the child. We are looking for foster homes which provide adequate space to a suitable standard. Our expectation is that foster children over the age of two will have their own bedroom. You can foster if you rent or live in council or housing association accommodation.

I am a smoker, can I still foster?

Currently we do not place children under 5 or vulnerable children who have respiratory, heart or other medical conditions, in homes where there is a smoker, (This includes the use of e-cigarettes). In addition to this, we have specific guidelines which outline the practical steps that can be taken to minimise children's exposure to tobacco smoke which we expect foster carers to abide by.

I am a disabled person, can I foster?

YES. People with disabilities do become foster carers and make a valuable contribution to fostering. As part of the approval process for all foster carers, your GP will need to verify that you are mentally and physically able to look after children and are not putting your own health at risk.

I have no children of my own, can I foster?

YES. We are looking for people who like and have a genuine interest in caring for children and young people. You must have had some experience of caring for or working with other people's children.

Who are our children?

Sophie and Lewis aged 7 and 5

are brother and sister who have a close and warm relationship. Lewis and Sophie's parents often left the children alone in the house to care for themselves and refused to change their lifestyle.

Lewis is a bright and cheerful boy who is full of energy and enjoys school and although he needs extra help at school, he is catching up and is an enthusiastic learner. He thrives on encouragement and responds well to praise for his good work. He likes being outdoors and can be mischievous on occasions but responds well to firm boundaries and clear indications of what is and is not acceptable.

Sophie loves to dress up and play with her baby doll. She enjoys school and makes friends easily. Sophie's speech is slightly delayed and although she is thought to be behind her peers, she is progressing well.

Sophie is very protective of her brother. They have been in their current foster placement since coming into care and have built up good relationships with all family members. They now need a permanent placement that will provide a stable home life for them together. It is hoped that this can be achieved through adoption, but if this is not possible, then a permanent foster home will be sought.

Sophia is an 8 month old baby

whose mum abused alcohol in pregnancy and after birth. Sophia presents as a lethargic baby, who shows little response to smiles and stimulation. Whilst Sophia is happy to lay in her cot for long periods, she needs someone who can dedicate a great deal of time to her care so she can learn to sit unaided and interact with others. The neglect and the alcohol abuse means Sophia has frequent visits to the paediatrician and physiotherapy for her health problems.

The local authority is asking the court for permission for her to be adopted. This process may take up to 18 months. When a new family is found for Sophia, her carer will need to work closely with the adopters, to teach them about her needs and help everyone to develop a bond with each other.

Claire is 14 years old

and needs someone who can help her through to independence. Claire has had some extremely difficult experiences in her life; her mother and father are addicted to drugs. Having been rejected by her parents, she has low self esteem and has little idea of how to behave socially, finding it difficult to make relationships, particularly with other children. Claire came into care when she was 12 years old after neighbours found her sleeping outside. Since being in care, Claire has found it difficult to settle in foster care and often tests the boundaries. However, Claire loves outings, takes care of her appearance, enjoys pop music and can be good company. She is articulate, intelligent and has great potential. Claire needs a stable family home where she will receive one-to-one attention, therefore she is likely to do particularly well with a single carer who can set the boundaries and help her to build and maintain relationships for the future.

Ben is a lively 4 year old

who has Cerebral Palsy. He has lived with foster carers since he was born because his young mother felt unable to look after him although she still has regular contact and is very fond of him. His present carers give him lots of love and encouragement and are very much involved in his medical care. Ben needs to be with foster carers who can help him get the most out of his childhood, maintain contact with his mother and in the long term, prepare him for an independent adult life.

Saying hello, saying goodbye...

When it has been planned for a child or young person to come into care, you often have the chance to meet them before they come to stay, giving you and the child the opportunity to prepare.

Sometimes a planned move is not possible and you may only have a short time to get things ready. Children and young people can arrive upset, angry, confused and often frightened, even though they may be putting on a brave face. Some may welcome the chance to talk, others just need time to settle. Whatever the circumstances, getting it right needs patience and understanding. Every child copes in a different way and you will need to look at each as an individual, even when they are part of a family group.

A child could be with you for a few weeks or much longer.

Saying goodbye is and always will be, difficult. No matter what the circumstances or how long you have looked after a child or young person, if it is time for them to move back to live with their family, to their adoptive family or on to another placement, a foster carer has to learn to adapt and this is what fostering is all about.

As a foster carer you will look after children and young people, help them to keep links with their family and work in partnership with other agencies to achieve the best outcomes for them. Carers regularly speak of a sense of achievement in helping them to accomplish this.

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It is impossible for a foster carer to keep all the children they care for. We are like stepping stones and our stone is the one in the middle.

A child can wobble on the first stone and then they move onto our stone. We hold them tight, stop them wobbling and help to make them feel safe and secure. We then guide them onto the next stepping stone where they can stand, safe and sound and move on to have a happy and secure future.

Quote by foster carer

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Therapeutic Foster Care

Nottinghamshire fostering service has been developing its ground-breaking model of therapeutic foster care. We promote relationship-based therapeutic approaches within fostering and our service benefits from qualified therapists and therapeutically trained family workers. This has been positive as our carers have been supported to develop the resilience and practical skills they need for placements to endure.

Our approach supports foster carers to understand the effects of early life trauma on children's development, and how to use their relationship with a foster child to help them heal. Being playful, accepting of the whole child, curious, and empathetic (known as PACE), is the key to building a therapeutic relationship and we have embedded this approach in our foster carer community over the years.

We offer specialist therapeutic training and out of hours support.



Helping children to keep in touch with their families

Children and young people who are separated from their family may find this upsetting and confusing. Some children who are fostered return home to live, whereas others may not. Helping children stay in touch with family and friends and maintain relationships, where it is safe to do so, is an important part of fostering.

- Would you be able to encourage and support a child to visit their family?
- Would you be able to assist with transporting a child to and from visiting their family?
- Would you be able to support a child to have phone calls or write letters to family members?

Sometimes visits with family can impact on your family's routine. Anger and confusion can be common reactions and some children may cry or become withdrawn around visiting time. It is important that as a foster carer you are empathetic to the way a child is feeling.

For some children, visits with their family could be as frequent as every day.





Steps to foster

Step 1 Initial Enquiry

Give us a call on **0115 804 4440** or make an enquiry on our website www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/care/fostering/fostering-in-nottinghamshire. If you give us a call, one of our dedicated recruitment team will have an initial chat with you, answer any questions you have and take some details. If you make an enquiry on our website, one of our recruitment and assessment team will call you back to have the initial chat. You will be invited to an information event or we will come out to see you in your home.

Step 2 Home Visit

A supervising social worker from our assessment team will contact you to discuss your interest and arrange a convenient time to visit you and your family and talk through any questions you may have. There will be a follow up visit, giving you a chance to think about the decision to foster. There may be a follow up visit, or you may be linked with an established foster carer, giving you a chance to think about the decision to foster.

Step 3 Registration of Interest

You will hopefully have had lots of information and decided fostering is right for you. There is some paperwork to complete, such as consenting to checks and references. You will be supported at every step of the process.

Step 4 Training

**To prepare you for the fostering role, you will attend Skills to Foster training.
The course covers areas such as:**

- Understanding the role of the foster carer, the child's social worker and other agencies
- Training, support and development standards for foster care
- Child Development
- Separation and loss
- The impact of early childhood experience on attachment and behaviour
- Positive approaches to managing behaviour
- Health needs of children and young people
- Diversity and identity
- Child protection and handling disclosures of abuse
- Safer Care practices
- Maintaining links and moving on



Step 5 Assessment

This involves a supervising social worker visiting you several times to get to know you, your family, frequent visitors, your home and your experiences to make sure you can offer a child safety, security and stability.

The supervising social worker writes a detailed report covering all the information you have shared, outlining your abilities and attributes. You will see this report and have the opportunity to add your own comments in writing.



Step 6 The Fostering Panel

Your detailed application report will then be presented to the fostering panel. Fostering panel members may have a relevant qualification, experience in adoption or fostering, or may have spent time in foster care themselves. You will be encouraged to attend the panel with your supervising social worker, where the panel may ask you or the service any questions they have.

The panel decides whether to recommend your approval to the Agency Decision Maker, who then considers their recommendation to reach a decision. You will then receive a letter confirming this and a certificate if you are approved.

If you haven't been approved, your supervising social worker will explain why, and you may be able to reapply in the future.



Step 7 Matching and Placement

Once you've been approved, the matching process will begin and you will be contacted by the fostering team to discuss a placement that is right for you, your family and the foster child.



Step 8 Ongoing development and support

You will receive ongoing, support and guidance from your supervising social worker. We have a fantastic training programme and a number of courses for you to choose from, which will encourage your learning and development, as a foster carer for Nottinghamshire County Council.

Types of fostering

Many people don't realise that there are many different types of fostering and that being a foster carer does not always involve a full time commitment. Some carers choose to specialise in one area of fostering, but others may opt to take children with a variety of needs.



Bridging placement (Short-medium term)

You'll be asked to provide a safe and secure home environment for a child to live in, while Children's Services work with the child's family. At the same time you and Children's Services will help the child understand what is happening, and find out what they need to grow up safely. The aim of a bridging placement is to help the children return home to their own family or, if this is not possible, to support them to move on to a permanent placement - either an adoptive family or permanent foster carer.



Long term/permanent

Sometimes it becomes clear that children will not be able to return to live with their own families. Perhaps the family has not been able to change their lifestyle in a way that will protect the child from harm, or the parent's mental or physical illness has deteriorated. Many parents love their children dearly, however, because of things that have happened in their own lives, they may never be able to care for them safely. You'll provide a safe and secure home for children to grow up in and help prepare them for adult life, whilst at the same time help to keep them in contact with their birth family and relatives. Keeping siblings together is very important. Often these children have experienced many changes in their lives and helping them stay together maintains security, comfort and stability. If you can take on siblings, you'll be helping to keep these children together.



Support care

If you are not available to care for a child on a full-time basis, then you may be considered as a support carer. These placements are important as support foster carers offer advice and support to both the child and family. Support care can be utilised to give a break to a full-time foster carer and allow the child to have a well-earned break too. Nottinghamshire fostering service strives to build positive links between children and support carers so that breaks away from the main fostering home is a positive experience for all involved.

Support care can also be to give a break to a full-time foster carer. You will provide short, regular periods of care, such as a few days in the week, regular weekends or short breaks in the school holidays. Because support care often happens at weekends, there is an expectation that you will be able to work with the full time carer to provide transport to and from your home.

Support carers receive the Basic Fostering Allowance plus levels payment, paid pro-rata for the days the children and young people stay with them.



Family and Friends/ Kinship

When a child comes into care, the local authority must decide on the most appropriate place for the child to live. Children are often placed with a relative, friend or other 'connected person' if that is in the child's best interests. Family and friends are assessed to provide care, and many proceed to become official foster carers for a child.



Short Breaks (Disabled children)

Our Short Breaks and Fostering Service (Disabled Children) is a county-wide service which provides short breaks for disabled children and young people aged 0-18 years who may be physically disabled, learning disabled or have complex health needs (or a combination of these).

Foster care families welcome a disabled child/young person into their homes for overnight short breaks.

These links provide opportunities for disabled children/ young people to make new friends, develop their independence and enjoy new activities.

Previous experience of caring for or working with disabled young people is essential.

Ongoing training is provided on a range of topics relevant to the task, and all carers receive regular supervision.



Support and training

Individual support

Once approved, you will have your own supervising social worker who will visit you and your family regularly. Their role is to support you and your family whilst you are fostering and to offer advice about any concerns or worries you may have.

Every child or young person who is looked after by the local authority has their own social worker who works closely with the child and their family. They will also visit regularly to see the child and offer any help or guidance you may need. As a foster carer you will be required to keep records about a child's placement and attend meetings where you will be able to discuss the placement and help make plans for the child's future.

Training

Within the first twelve months of being approved (eighteen months for family and friends) you are required to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for foster care. The standards set out expectations for foster carers. By attending a mandatory fostering induction training course as well as a positive first year review, you will be considered to have achieved these standards. During your fostering career you will be expected to complete at least 20 hours of training a year, to learn about different aspects of caring for children. Training programmes are organised by our dedicated training coordinators and are held in different venues around the county. Courses are held over weekends and evenings as well as during the day to enable all foster carers to have the opportunity



to attend.

Out of hours support

Our service aims to be as flexible as possible, to support the needs of our foster carers. In addition to the Emergency Duty Team there is also an 'Out of Hours Fostering Service' where supervising social workers are available to provide advice and support up until 10 pm and at weekends.

Support Hubs

We encourage our foster carers to meet with each other on a regular basis at various support groups or "hubs" to talk about different issues and offer advice, helping each other. Your supervising social worker will advise you where and when these groups are meeting.

My Learning, My Career

Carers can book themselves onto training courses via a dedicated website called My Learning My Career, to access classroom and online training.

Fostering Support Team


Carers and foster children have the support of a specialised team who are trained to deliver therapeutic interventions. Their service is flexible and can be delivered both in the home or local community. Their main role is to strengthen placement stability, deliver ongoing support and training and reduce placement breakdowns.

Support care

Support carers provide short, regular periods of care, such as a few days in the week, regular weekends and short breaks in the school holidays. This type of foster care helps to support and maintain a child's main foster placement as well as extending support networks. Fostering allowances, and levels payments, are unaffected for the first 28 full days, in each financial year, when a child is away from his/her main foster placement for a period of support care.



Foster Carer Benefits

- **Inspire Courses** – All of our foster carers and 16+ fostered children are able to access any of the many courses available through Inspire, free of charge. These take place in Nottinghamshire libraries across the County. www.inspireculture.org.uk
- **Max Cards** – All foster children have access to a Max Card. This allows free or discounted access to thousands of venues across the UK, such as Merlin attractions, Drayton Manor, Sea Life Centres, Virgin Experience days and Go Ape, for fostering families.
- **Nottinghamshire County Council discounts and benefits** - All foster carers are eligible to a variety of discounts and benefits at local shops and amenities. Our foster carers are issued with a foster carer identification card once approved.
- **The Fostering Network** - As a foster carer, you will be offered free membership to the Fostering Network. This entitles you to information on training events, legal advice, advocacy and mediation, discounts and a quarterly magazine. For more information, visit www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk
- **Foster care monthly newsletter** - Foster carers will receive a regular electronic newsletter from us featuring news, updates, details of training events and interesting articles.
- **Fostering website** - All foster carers have access to a dedicated website giving carers information, learning materials and videos relating to fostering topics, a diary of events, news, updates and much more.
- **Tax Relief** - Foster carers do not need to pay tax on their first £10,000 of income (related to fostering) and receive further tax relief for every week that a child lives with them. This means foster carers are not liable for tax on fostering incomes much greater than £10,000 per annum.
- **Library entitlements** - As a foster carer for Nottinghamshire you can have a special library card that entitles you to take out up to 36 items at a time. This is in addition to your personal library card if you have one. Items are issued for the standard 3-week loan period but there are no overdue charges or reservation fees. Audiobooks are also issued free of charge.
- **Clumber Park bike hire discounts** - Our foster carers are entitled to have a free child's cycle hire at Clumber Park, through the National Trust, when accompanied by an adult cycle hire. This is an exclusive benefit for Nottinghamshire County Council foster carers.

Fostering allowances

Regular fostering allowances

All mainstream foster carers receive a basic weekly allowance. The basic weekly allowance, paid by Nottinghamshire County Council, is to provide for the average family cost (by age) of fully caring for a child for example, accommodation, food, clothing, pocket money and sundry items such as books and play materials. This allowance also assumes that some minor additional costs are incurred through fostering activities.

There are further allowances for birthdays, annual festivals and holidays which are available to cover some of the extra costs associated with these occasions.

Specific/additional allowances

Some circumstances may give rise to extra costs which clearly fall above the basic fostering allowances. One-off, specific allowances can be paid, depending on the child's requirements.

Will the allowances affect my benefits?

All foster carers need to register as self employed with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. There is no effect on Income Support if people register as self employed foster carers, as any income received from fostering is not taken into account.

For more information visit www.hmrc.gov.uk

Table of allowances for April 2021 – March 2022

Age Group	0-4	5-10	11-15	16-17
Basic fostering allowance	£138.00	£152.00	£173.00	£202.00
Fostering supplement	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00
Birthday allowance	£138.00	£152.00	£173.00	£202.00
Festivities allowance	£138.00	£152.00	£173.00	£202.00

Breakdown of Basic Fostering Allowances

These are the amounts that Nottinghamshire County Council consider appropriate to meet the fostered child's weekly needs.

Age Group	0-4	5-10	11-15	16-17
Food	£39	£41	£45	£52
Clothing	£35	£40	£45	£50
Transport/Mileage	£11.25	£11.25	£11.25	£11.25
Personal (including pocket money, activities)	£12.75	£19.75	£31.75	£48.75
Household (contribution towards Council Tax, utility bills, usual wear and tear in household)	£40.00	£40.00	£40.00	£40.00
Total	£138.00	£152.00	£173.00	£202.00

Weekly pocket money rates – (Provided for guidance only)

Age Group	0-4	5-10	11-15	16-17
	£2.00	£5.00	£9.00	£12.00

Levels payments

Levels payments give foster carers the chance to be acknowledged for their skills and to identify areas for development. As carers gain experience and develop as foster carers they can progress through three levels. Every foster carer has a supervising social worker who they work closely with to demonstrate that they meet the standards set out for each level.

We offer training in many areas including child development, equality and diversity, managing children's behaviour, communicating with children and young people, working with birth families and helping children who have experienced abuse.

Each new level pays an allowance, additional to the Basic Fostering Allowance for each child or young person living in the foster home.

If applicants have a relevant fostering experience or are transferring to us, there is the potential to start at a higher level, subject to the outcome of their assessment.



level one

Most newly approved carers will start on this level for the first year of their fostering career.

You will receive an additional **£28** per week per child at this level.



level three

After additional experience and significant training, carers can be assessed for level three. You will receive an additional **£113** per week per child aged 0 - 4 and **£139** per week per child for 5 - 18 year olds.



level two

On completion of the Training, Support and Development Standards, which should be completed within the first year of fostering, foster carers can progress to level 2. You will receive an additional **£57** per child per week at this level.

What do experienced foster carers think?

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The children are the most important thing. This helps to make sure they get the carers who have the skills to meet their needs

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“

I often wondered
whether I could foster.
Why did I wait so long?

Take the next step... I did and
I've never looked back!

Nottinghamshire
foster carer ”